

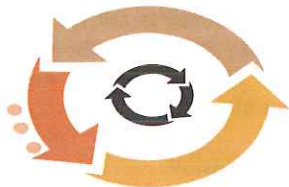
On the RISE Horizon

NEBRASKA STATE PROBATION

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RISE Specialists: Keeping Focused on Probationers by Kari Rumbaugh, RISE Program Director



Generational Poverty

The RISE Program has become an essential piece of how probationers are served in rural areas of Nebraska.

The RISE program is evidence of how important it is

to focus on education and employment while working with probationers.

Why is it so essential? Because this success is directly linked to lower recidivism rates.

Since RISE began in September of 2007, 80% of the participants have not returned to the probation system.

One of the ways the RISE program plans to continue this success, is by keeping focused on the probationers.

One way to keep focused is by knowing with whom the RISE Specialists are working with.

Generational poverty affects many the participants in the RISE program. RISE Specialists were trained this year by Charles Lieske, RISE Specialist in District #5. Understanding the reasons why probationers struggle is the first step to helping them successfully leave the system and not return.



RISE Program Goal

The **RISE** program will reduce recidivism through improving education and employment opportunities for probationers in rural areas of Nebraska.

What is Generational Poverty?

by Charles Lieske, RISE Program Specialist District #5

Situational poverty can happen to anyone who may fall on hard times; generational poverty occurs when poverty has been a way of life for two generations or more.

The effects of prolonged poverty can influence how individuals communicate and process information, and can also affect an individual's perspectives, motivations and values.

Understanding these elements, and how they may differ from our own, can help us be more effective in our service to probationers. This article will discuss generational poverty and how relationships with probationers is key to a successful outcome.

Motivations: The driving force behind decisions.

In *poverty*, survival and entertainment are paramount. Relationships are the basis for most decisions. Problems are seen as interlocking and hard to overcome.

When working with populations in poverty, it is important to speak in terms that seem realistic to clients from poverty.

For example, when trying to motivate a juvenile probationer to improve his attendance, talking about how graduation can make his life better, or about the unpleasant consequences that will come from continued truancy, may not be as effective. More motivating

to him is discussing this in terms of an important relationship. "How do you think your grandma will feel when you graduate high school? What do you think she'd say if you were the first in your family to go to college?"

People from generational poverty generally mistrust authority figures and are going to be more likely to do things because of a relationship with a probation employee, not the employee's badge or title.

Temporal Perspective: Decisions are made in light of the past, present or future.

In *poverty*, the present is the most important. Decisions are made in the moment based either on feelings or survival.

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What is Generational Poverty? (continued)

by Charles Lieske, RISE Program Specialist District #5



Over 1,000 Probationers have participated in the RISE Program.

“Participants will use these new-found skills to RISE to their FUTURE.”



If you are interested in more information about the RISE Program or how to become a RISE Program Specialist, visit our website: www.probation.rise.ne.gov

Consider the following example; A diabetic client isn't taking her insulin. The officer has tried everything he can think of to get her to comply; even going so far as to say, "You will die if you don't take your medicine." Surely this will tap her sense of survival with this comment. Not necessarily.

If her choice is paying for either food or medicine, the more immediate threat of starvation supersedes the ambiguous threat of a possible future death. Additionally, lack of food directly causes her children to suffer now. Generally, in poverty households, a mother's sense of responsibility to her children supersedes her own suffering, especially when her suffering isn't immediate.

Another scenario: She's scared of needles. Avoiding the immediate fear will also far outweigh any possible future consequence. "We're all going to die anyway," she might say. In either event, reframe the situa-

tion in the present. "What would become of your kids if something happened to you right now?"

The Value of Time: The realities of our lives shape how we look at a 24-hour day.

In *poverty*, tasks take longer. Everyday living is more time consuming.

Many times clients get a bad reputation for missing appointments or for giving outrageous excuses. Consider this example:

A client says she cannot make her appointment because she has to do laundry. An officer may think, (Why can't she run downstairs, throw in a load, make our meeting and throw the clothes in the drier when she gets home?) It's because her laundry day doesn't look the same as others.

First she has to gather six baskets of laundry at her door.

Then she must wrestle with the kids, getting them ready to go. Next she trudges seven blocks, keeping track of kids and balancing six baskets of laundry all the way to the bus stop. And this is just the beginning

When a client gives an excuse not clearly understandable, don't be afraid to ask for clarification. Sometimes the outrageous won't seem so outrageous after all.

In Conclusion

Because many probation employees come from a middle class background, interactions with clients tend to be initiated using middle class communication styles and judged using middle class motivations, perspectives and values. As probation employees take a step back and curtail projecting these values onto clients, there is a greater potential to connect with people and impact their lives in a much more meaningful way.

Great Story: How a Girl Changed Her Life.

by Michelle Mendez, RISE Program Specialist District #5

One of the success stories from Schuyler, Nebraska:

At the age of 13 a female probationer I worked with was in a gang, drinking every day, and using meth. She also had run away from home. Her meth use continued until she found out she pregnant at the age of 15. She had a baby boy. The father of her son was also in a gang.

Further, she was on probation five times as a juvenile and did not have a good relationship with her mother. During her time as a gang member, she got several gang tattoos on her

hands and arms. She also shaved her eyebrows as a sign of being in the gang.

She started working with RISE at the age of 19. She was devoted to turning her life around. She is no longer in a gang and has removed three tattoos and plans to remove four more, plus grew back her eyebrows. She cut off all ties with the father of her son so her son isn't exposed to the gang life.

She is currently in college for nursing, has her CNA license and is working at a nursing home. She said she was really glad she participated in the

RISE program because she learned how to have a successful interview for her CNA job.

During her time in the RISE program she also struggled to get her driver's license, so I studied with her until she passed her test.

She is living on her own, taking care of her son, going to college and working, all as a single mother. She is off probation, has been clean for a year, in addition to getting her juvenile record sealed.

She overcame many obstacles to become a better person, in part to the success of RISE.